

An Intrepid New Journey Through Japan's Ancient Land



Step into the rich history and culture of Japan traversing the Hitachi-no-kuni Long Trail. © Ibaraki Prefecture

Among the multitude of tourists setting their sights on Japan, many are seeking a way to experience the Japan of the past; perhaps a time when samurai roamed the lands or when pilgrimages were made to ancient shrines. In Ibaraki Prefecture, a mere hour and a half from Tokyo, a new trail is allowing adventurers to do just that.



The Hitachi-no-kuni Long Trail is a (planned) 320 km circular route that weaves through the northern part of Ibaraki Prefecture, a region that was once so prosperous it was called Tokoyonokuni (Land of Eternal Life). The trail crosses mountains and valleys, through forests and across coastlines, passing through towns, cities, and villages, connecting travelers to the region's history, culture, and stunning natural scenery.

Spearheaded by locals, the Hitachi-no-kuni Long Trail acts as their love letter to their home and community, one they invite the rest of the world to join and marvel at. To mark the new trail, a special website - available in English and Japanese - has been created that shows off the attractions one can find along the way. The beautifully designed site boasts an illustrated interactive map that showcases the nine areas of the route, with links leading to explanations about what each has to offer.

One such attraction is the Fukuroda Falls, located within the Okukuji Area highlighted on the interactive map. Designated as one of Japan's 'Three Great Waterfalls,' the dramatic cascading waterfall plummets 120 meters down a large, four tiered rock face. During the autumnal season, the waterfall is framed in scarlets and gold as the foliage transforms from the vibrant greens of spring and summer to the fiery colors of autumn. In the winter, the roar of the water is quieted as the fall freezes over and a hush overcomes the mountain.

Heading next towards the coastline, hikers can take in the stunning vistas at Takado Kohama Coast. This scenic spot is formed by two inlets sandwiched between sheer sea cliffs, where the contrast of the white sandy beaches, green pine trees, aquamarine waters, and vivid blue sky create quite the stunning vista.



The Hitachi-no-kuni Long Trail not only takes travelers through the stunning natural world of Ibaraki Prefecture but winds through six cities and towns - Hitachi, Hitachiota, Takahagi, Kitaibaraki, Hitachiomiya, and Daigo.

At these locations, hikers can imagine what it felt like to traverse the country in a time before cars, trains, and planes, stopping and resting in vibrant communities filled with culture. Today, the retro town of Daigo retains the nostalgic charms of Japan's Showa period (1926-1989), with renovated houses now welcoming travelers in the form of cafes and restaurants.

The website also dives into the interactions one can have with local communities along the trail. Beautifully shot short movies with evocative music showcase how travelers can connect with locals through cultural exchanges such as apple and tea leaf picking. Along with acquainting themselves with present-day culture, visitors can feel the history of the area at various historic sites scattered throughout the trail.

Mt. Oiwa, said to be the oldest sacred mountain in Hitachi-no-kuni, is one such excellent example. Here, religious remains have been discovered dating back to the Jomon period (between 14,000 and 300 BC). At the foot of this mountain, which is mentioned in one of the oldest books in Japan, "Hitachinokuni Fudoki," you can enter Oiwa Shrine where 188 deities are enshrined. Here you can also receive prayers by a priestess, a unique experience visitors would struggle to find elsewhere.

One of the great benefits of this trail is that you can easily pick and choose how much of the trail you wish to undertake. The circular course allows you to plan freely where to walk from and where to finish. If you wish to visit just for a day, you can easily hop on a train from Tokyo, arrive in roughly an hour and a half, and simply set off on your journey. After a day of walking and taking in the sights, you can easily head back to Tokyo that same day.



The website provides a three day, two night model plan for how to experience the beauty of the trail as well as two-day and one-day tours that can easily be booked online.

Due to its recent development, early travelers on the Hitachi-no-kuni Long Trail will be the original pioneers of this particular journey, a novelty that has become rare in a world where everywhere feels explored. Perhaps, in a few hundred years, people will look back to this point in time and compare themselves to us, just as we do the samurai, merchants, and monks who formed the paths of old. The Hitachi-no-kuni Long Trail offers tourists a way to connect back to the time-honored tradition of relishing the journey, not just the destination.

Official Links : <https://hlt.pref.ibaraki.jp/en>

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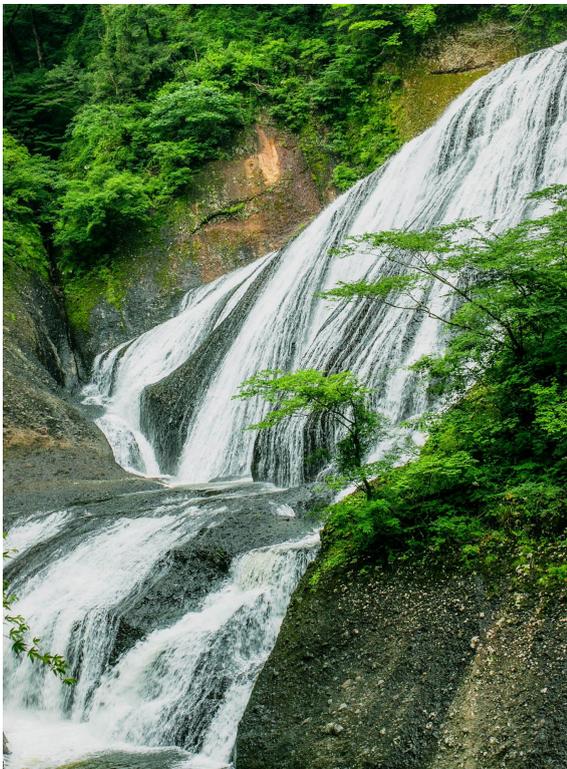
Press kit (6)

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Step into the rich history and culture of Japan traversing the Hitachi-no-kuni Long Trail.

2



Fukurodanotaki.

3



Takado Kohama Beach.

4



Namasefuji.

5



Okunotakisan sou.

6



Hananukikeikoku.